In the Claims

The following is an amendment to and a complete listing of the claims that replaces all prior listings of the claims in this application.

1.(currently amended) ~~Process~~ A process for the sterile packaging of a prosthetic implant made of polyethylene, ~~of the type in which,~~ including the steps of successively[[,]] placing the implant ~~is placed~~ in a flexible, gas-impermeable sachet ~~comprising~~ having an opening adapted to be sealed, creating a vacuum ~~is created~~ in the sachet ~~before it is closed hermetically by~~ and then sealing its opening, ~~and the implant placed in the sachet *in vacuo* is sterilized by irradiation,~~

~~wherein it comprises steps carried out successively before the irradiation of the implant placed in the first sachet *in vacuo* which consist in:~~

[[-]] placing the sachet ~~*in vacuo*~~ containing the implant in a gas-impermeable envelope comprising an opening adapted to be sealed,

[[-]] ~~forming~~ establishing an inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope, and [[-]] closing the envelope hermetically by sealing its opening, and thereafter, sterilizing the implant within the sachet and the envelope by irradiation .

2.(currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the closure of the sachet ~~and/or~~ and of the envelope is effected by heat-sealing their respective openings.

3.(original) The process of Claim 1, wherein the inert gaseous atmosphere formed in the envelope is constituted by argon, nitrogen or a mixture of these gaseous elements.

4.(currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the sachet ~~comprises~~ includes a layer of aluminum.

5.(currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the envelope ~~comprises~~ includes a layer of a polyamide and a layer of a polyethylene.

6.(currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein ~~it comprises, in order to form~~ the step of establishing the inert gaseous atmosphere in the envelope~~,~~ ~~steps consisting in~~ includes:

[[-]] creating a vacuum around and inside the envelope, and

[[-]] injecting an inert gas inside the envelope until the pressure inside the envelope reaches a predetermined value ~~strictly~~ less than atmospheric pressure, and,

after having hermetically closed the envelope, the ~~latter~~ envelope is subjected to atmospheric pressure.

7.(currently amended) The process of Claim 6, wherein the inert gas is injected into the envelope in a calibrated manner.

8.(currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein, before or after irradiation of the implant, [[the]] an assembly formed by the implant, the sachet and the envelope is placed in a rigid packing whose internal volume is substantially equal to the volume occupied by the ~~envelope~~ assembly.

9.(original) The process of Claim 8, wherein, before placing the assembly formed by the implant, the sachet and the envelope in the rigid packing, the envelope is folded on itself.

10.(currently amended) The process of Claim 8, wherein the rigid packing and the envelope cooperate by ~~complementarity of shape~~ being of complementary shapes in order to immobilize the sachet containing the implant.